

Lesson 7

PROPHETIC TERMINOLOGY

Amils and premils are in disagreement over basic Biblical terminology such as “age, “end of the age,” “last days, “the latter days,” etc. These terms are basic to a right understanding of prophecy.

They believe that with the coming of Christ in His first advent, the world entered into the last age or last days, and the church has been in the last days for two thousand years. Some amils believe that we are nearing the end of the age (the last days) and Christ’s second advent is very near.

Postmils also believe the church is in the last days, but this in no way means we are near the end of the age, for the world must experience a golden age before Christ returns.

Premils, however, believe that there is a cosmic (word) perspective to prophecy and there is an eschatological complex of events, which begin with the first advent and include events surrounding the second advent.

Amillennialism

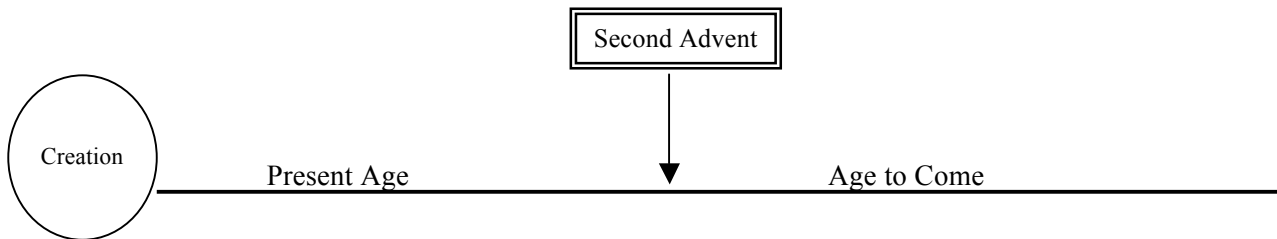
Age

The word “world” (*aión*) should be translated “age,” which denotes a time period.

Two Ages

The Bible divides up history into two distinct ages—the present age and the age to come (Matt. 12:32; Eph. 1:21; Mark 10:29-30). It becomes quite obvious that “the present age” refers to time now on earth and “the age to come” refers to the eternal state. We assume that the present age began with the creation.

There are only two ages in the Bible and there is no earthly millennium in between them.



Second Advent

According to Matthew 24:3, the disciples asked the Lord Jesus, “What shall be the sign of your coming and the close (completion) of the age (*aión*).” The context of Matthew 24 tells us that the “end of the age” will come at the second advent of Jesus Christ.

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares tells us that the second advent will end this age (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).

Resurrection

Luke 20:34-36 says that a future age (“that age”) will be ushered in by a resurrection of the dead; in this case the resurrection of the just (true believers).

Characteristics of the Present Age

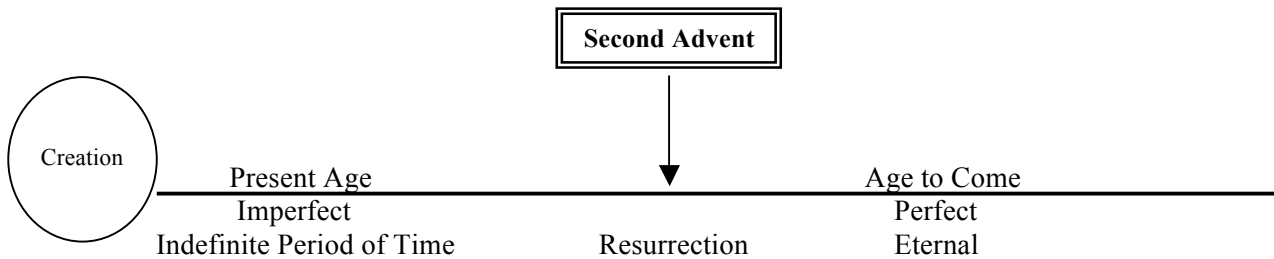
The present age is evil (Gal. 1:4) and dominated by Satan (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Unsaved men perpetrate the evil philosophy of this age (Eph. 2:1-2) and it is an age of worry and anxiety (Matt. 13:22). The spirit of the present age is in conflict with God and His purposes, which will only be finally realized in the eternal state. Therefore, Christians are not to conform to the present age and are to live for the age to come (Rom. 12:1-2).

The Length of This Present Age

No one but God knows for sure, but we know it has gone on for thousands of years. There are a few indications from the Bible that this was to be a long period of time. Jesus, when He gave the Great Commission, told His disciples He would be with them “even unto the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20). It would obviously take a great deal of time to evangelize the world (cf. Matt. 24:14).

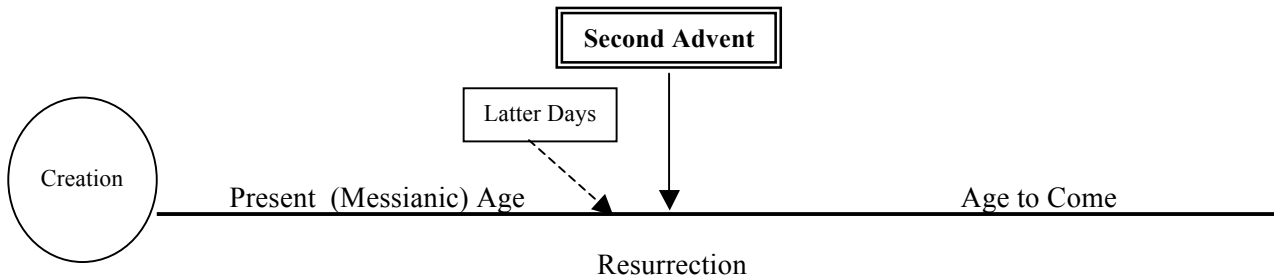
Finality of the Present Age

This present age is the last and final age before the eternal state. 1 Cor. 10:11 says of Christians that upon them “the ends of the world (ages) are come.” Christ has come and ushered in the last days (Heb. 9:26).



Last Days

Amils and Postmils believe that “the last days” and “latter days” refer to this present age only. They believe that the entire present age is the Messianic age and it is divided by the first advent of Christ. Before the first advent of Christ, men looked forward to Messiah who would come. Since the first advent and the Cross, men look backward to the Messiah who has come.



1. The coming of Christ in the first advent ushered in the “last days” (Heb. 1:2; Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20).
2. Unsaved are said to be in “the last days” (James 5:3) and this was a first century letter.
3. First century Christians are said to be living in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1).
4. The Day of Pentecost is said to have occurred in the “last days” (Acts 2:16,17) and that was two thousand years ago.
5. First century Christians were warned about false teachers who were then arising in the church. These mockers were arising in “the last days.” (2 Pet. 3:3ff cf. Jude 18).
6. Christians are said to be in “the last hour” in the struggle with the spirit of Antichrist (John 2:18).

7. All of the last days will end in “the last day” (John 6:40; 11:24) or “the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5).
8. **Conclusion:** Christians have been in the last days since the first advent of Christ. Therefore, all prophecies referring to the “last days” or the “latter days” in the Old Testament are spiritually fulfilled in the gospel age of the New Testament (Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14).

Premillennialism

Age

Premils would agree essentially with the teaching that there is a “present age” and an “age to come” (eternal state), but they believe that there is progressive revelation in the New Testament about an earthly kingdom. The New Testament is the final interpreter and if there is evidence from the New Testament about an earthly kingdom then this evidence must be fit into the overall system. The premil believes that there is an eschatological complex of events.

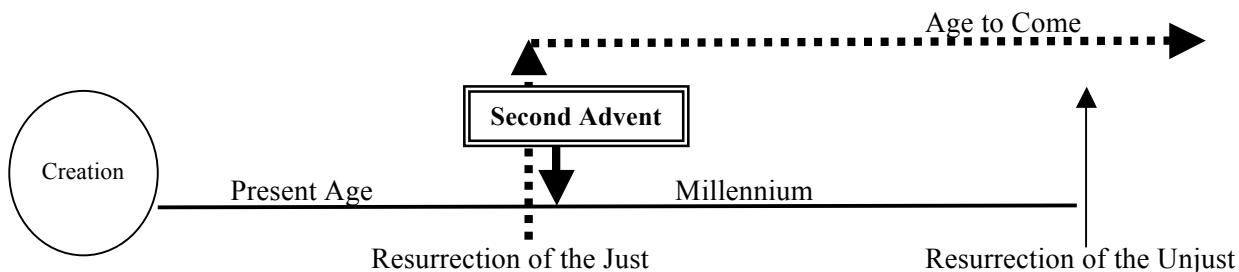
Rev. 20:1-6

The premil assumes a normal, grammatical and historical interpretation of Rev. 20:1-6 and believe that the New Testament gives evidence for an intervening period between the present age and the age to come and that is the millennium (earthly reign of Christ).

Here, we can only say that it is our conviction that the Scripture teaches that before the final consummation of God’s redemptive purpose, the earth is to experience an extended period of our Lord’s glorious rule. The church age is the period of Christ’s concealed glory; the Age to Come will be the age of the Father’s sovereignty when Christ delivers His rule to the Father and becomes Himself subject to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28) that God may be all in all. The Millennium will be the period of the manifestation of Christ’s glory. If the Age to Come is thought of as existing “beyond history the Millennium will witness the triumph of God’s Kingdom within history. (Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*)

Rev. 20:1-6 also declares by progressive New Testament revelation that the resurrection of the just (believers) and unjust (unbelievers) will occur in two stages (John 5:25-29). The just shall be raised at the second advent of Christ and the unjust after the millennial period before the eternal state.

Most premils see the millennium as a separate age and a few see it as a part of the eternal state (cf. Culver, *Daniel and the Last Days*). Whatever, it will be an earthly rule of Christ over His sects. The second advent ends history as we presently know it and begins a new phase of history on earth (the millennium) that will extend into the eternal state. The millennium, in many ways, is beyond our experience because we have never been in an environment where Christ ruled supreme. and sin was at its minimum.



Other Arguments for a Future Earthly Millennium

The Old Testament taught a future earthly kingdom for this world with Christ reigning supreme (Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14; Isa. 2:2-4). If the Old Testament taught an earthly kingdom, there should be some hint of it in the New Testament.

Matt. 6:10: Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Matt. 19:27-28: The Lord taught a future regeneration when He shall sit on a throne and the Twelve Apostles shall rule over the twelve tribes of Israel with Christ. This must be an earthly scene.

Luke 22:15-18; 28-30: Jesus said He would not eat the Passover with His disciples again until the kingdom comes which must be an earthly scene. Again Christ tells His disciples that they will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel.

Acts 1:6: The disciples, after Christ’s death and resurrection, asked Christ if He was now going to restore an earthly kingdom to Israel. The Lord could have rebuked them and said that there was no earthly kingdom for Israel, but He did not. Christ said, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). In essence, Christ said that they were not to worry about the earthly kingdom for God would take care of that in His own time and plan, but until then, the disciples were to be witnesses for Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Acts 3:20,21: The “period of the restoration of all things” most likely refers to a future earthly kingdom because it was declared by the Old Testament prophets.

Rom. 4:13: A Gentile who believes in Christ is connected with the Abrahamic Covenant and is promised that he shall be an “heir of the world.”

Rom. 8:17ff: This passage states that the world (earth) shall be redeemed only when the true believers receive their total redemption which will take place at the second advent of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2). This passage clearly predicts a period of blessedness for the created world after the visible glorious return of Christ.

Rom. 11:25-27: These verses teach some kind of a future for Israel whether this is a return of national Israel or a return of mass numbers of Jews. At or around the second advent of Christ many Jews shall turn to Christ. This does not prove an earthly kingdom but it lends support to it, especially if the promises to Israel in the Old Testament are to be fulfilled.

1 Cor. 6:2-3; 4:8: This teaches that someday Christians shall “judge the world.” This undoubtedly will happen on earth.

1 Cor. 15:20-28: There is a future time coming when Christ shall turn over the kingdom to God, the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). This surely must include an earthly kingdom as well as a spiritual one.

Eph. 2:7: This verse states that Christ redeemed us by His grace that “in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” The word “ages” is plural and this may include a millennial age as well as the eternal state.

Rev. 5:10: This refers to believers who “will reign upon the earth.”

Matt. 5:5: This verse says the meek “shall inherit the earth.”

Last Days

There is no question that the New Testament writers considered themselves in the last days and that these days began with the first advent of Christ (Heb. 1:2; Heb. 9:26). From a broad cosmic perspective, they understood that the end of history on earth had already begun; yet there was a complex of events. For instance, the Apostle John did not deny that a literal Antichrist would appear on the scene of history; yet, he did not deny that the spirit of Antichrist was then in existence (1 John 2:18 cf. 2 Thess. 2:7-9).

In Acts 2:16-17, it cannot be proven for sure that all these events happened as predicted by Joel (Joel 3:1-5) actually happened on the Day of Pentecost. Some may wait for later fulfillment.

In his great address on the day of Pentecost, Peter (Acts 2:16-17) said, “This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, and it shall be in the last days. . .” It should be perfectly clear that Peter does not declare that everything predicted in Joel 3:1-5, the verses which he quotes, took place on the day of Pentecost. On the contrary, he indicates (v. 21) that Joel’s prophecy, the fulfillment of which was initiated on the day of Pentecost, contemplates an extended period of time during which men may “call upon the name of the Lord” and be saved. (J. O. Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*)

If an amil is willing to admit that the resurrection of the last day (John 6:40) is the last event of the last day, then he too has a modified complex of events. The premil takes this further into the tribulation, second advent and resurrection, millennium and the final resurrection (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1).

While it is true that Christians are said to be in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1), we can expect these evil characteristics to get progressively worse as we move on towards the second advent of Christ.

Conclusion

The cosmic perspective and complex of events is set forth by Buswell who says,

In the following chart I have endeavored to indicate how certain Scriptures give a “wide lens” view, in “cosmic perspective.” Thus I conceive that Isaiah 7:14,16; 9:6-7; 11:1-6 are passages which include events all the way from the birth of Christ to the New Heavens and the New Earth; and that Matthew 25:31-46 refers to events all the way from the rapture of the church to the Great White Throne Judgment. The scope of such references in “cosmic perspective” is to be ascertained by comparison with other Scriptures. (See chart below)

